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MISCELLANY

PHILADELPHIA TO LOSE ART GIFTS?

To the Editor of THE ART WORLD—Sir: Progressive civilization, indicated by the ever-growing interest in matters connected with the Fine and Applied Arts and by the establishment of Municipal Art Museums by many of our newer American cities in widely divergent sections of the country, is without reasonable doubt one of the results of our remarkable success as an industrial community. Let us not deceive ourselves with the shallow deductions of short-sighted theorists who blatantly claim that art should be free from all commercial considerations. It certainly is not now and probably never will be—as any one of even moderate power of observation and unbiased judgment can see for himself. Where would America be to-day, were it not for the generous donations and bequests of our wealthy commercial men and manufacturers of their collections to art museums for the enjoyment and instruction of the public?

One hears it said abroad, very often with a certain significant smile, that Americans do have an unusual power of accumulating colossal fortunes. We admit this without inquiring too closely into the ethical features of the case. The uses of such fortunes in the campaign of the education of the people is what we are mainly concerned with in this connection. It would merely be necessary to point out what has been done in that way in some of our larger Western cities, such as Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit and San Francisco, to prove the assertion that our financiers and leaders of industry have been largely instrumental in giving importance to those communities as art centers. This is all very well as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. What, for instance, could be more humiliating from the point of view of the higher ideals than to see, in the city of Philadelphia, famous from Colonial days as the scene of the activities of some of the most distinguished artists of international reputation, superb accumulations of works of art like the Widener and Johnson collections practically denied proper space for exhibition to the public through the lack of a suitable municipal gallery? Although the erection of the proposed building has been talked of for the past thirty years, the architects plans prepared and revised during the past ten years, and sufficient funds appropriated—yet no move is made beyond leveling the site!

Inexcusable as the situation seems to be, no one yet has been able to assign a cause for the interminable delays. What possible good would be accomplished by the tax-payers' suit recently begun, to block the city from proceeding with the work, it is difficult to conceive. As frequently happens in suits of this kind, there is inevitably engendered in the minds of those who put two and two together a suspicion that this one has been secretly instigated by parties "higher up" whose importance in the world of art might be seriously

diminished by the erection of a museum worthy of the city that Gilbert Stuart, the Peales, Benjamin West, Thomas Sully and a host of modern men have made famous. One might say *se non é vero é ben trovato* and meanwhile this shameful condition of things threatens to take a more serious turn. There is imminent danger, seeing that many other cities have provided accommodation for important collections of art works, that Philadelphia may lose a greater part of its inheritance, of value almost inestimable, through failure of appropriate space for installation. This loss would be irreparable and would be a lasting reflection upon the judgment of the municipality.

Eugene Castello
Philadelphia

THE PROPOSED SUNKEN GARDEN, CENTRAL PARK, MANHATTAN

A very pretty suggestion has been made in New York with reference to a reservoir in Central Park, Manhattan, which was part of the old Croton water system and can now be turned aside to other purposes. At least the site of the reservoir can. It lies between the Natural History and Metropolitan Museums and forms a hill of no mean elevation, whence one can partly discern the lay of the park.

The pretty suggestion is to utilize the hollow of the empty reservoir as an open-air theatre or stadium for monster concerts and popular pageants and treat the rest of the hollow left by the lake as a great sunken garden with decorations in architecture, a fountain and other sculpture. Plans have been issued and enthusiasm has been brought to bear; some editors have been generously moved to "boom" the idea and others have attacked the project.

And in fact the more one considers the matter, the more one concludes: the originators of this plan have hold of an excellent idea, but they have mistaken the place! As the city grows thicker and thicker round Central Park one feels the need of reducing rather than increasing the architecture that is not absolutely necessary. One sees at a glance that the Metropolitan and Natural History Museums themselves are absorbing the area about them as they grow, and one can not help sympathizing with citizens who urge the pulling down of any unnecessary structure in the parks.

If in the eyes of these "improvers" of Central Park the large sum of money necessary to this transformation seems a bagatelle, they may listen with respect to the argument of emplacement. Surely this is not the best spot for a huge concourse where citizens meet in their thousands. Large avenues of approach and surrounding squares would be needed for the coming and going of many thousands without detriment to the park. If an amphitheatre for large crowds is needed, Van

Cortlandt or Riverside Park would be far better, cooler and more accessible—if indeed one of the parks must be selected. What would be far more central and accessible would be some island in the East River like Blackwell's or Randall Island or some area on the east side of Manhattan where land is cheap and the necessary approaches to the great amphitheatre could be arranged. Including the land and the construction by *béton* and hollow brick, the cost would be less than an attempt to convert the reservoir would amount to. It might be well to look up the record of the "conversion" of the reservoir on Fifth Avenue into the Public Library. It is cheaper to proceed from an unoccupied site and build for the purpose from the bottom up than to coquette with the idea that an old structure can be adapted to modern and very different uses.

C'est magnifique mais ce n'est pas la guerre. Let the new disturbers of Central Park turn their attention to Riverside or Morningside Parks if they want a declivity to help them in an amphitheatre. But let them respect the original purposes of the founders of Central Park and keep it as far as possible a quiet park where the nerves of noise-ridden New Yorkers can find one place for relaxation. In Central Park one can still take a quiet stroll and when one talks it is not necessary—as yet—to yell.

SCULPTOR VERSUS PAINTER

One of the chosen haunts of artists in the Nutmeg State is Silvermine, Conn., and it is in the idyllic valley of the Silvermine River, than which nothing would seem more conducive to quiet, that a recent ruction has caused certain questions to be raised as to the psychology of sculptors versus painters. Are statuaries, by reason of the use of wet clay and the hammer, more prone than painters to revert to the habits and customs of the cave man, or say of the modern soldier who delves in mud and clay and hurls things at his enemies? Or conversely, does the tendency, the itching, the urge of the subliminal consciousness of a man to throw stones cause that man when embracing the artist career just naturally to become a sculptor? At any rate Mr. Charles Hoag lives on the Silvermine and is a manipulator of stone. But he does not confine himself to the comparatively peaceful task (in which he has back of him the precedents of ancestors of the Palæolithic and Neolithic Ages, millions of years before history began) of chipping stone into forms more or less approaching the shape of man and beast. He also hurls the stone, the loose stone, the common or garden "rock" as we Americans weirdly call it. And that was the trouble.

But before we proceed: Did Mr. Charles Hoag, who, very incredibly, is called a Hollander, hurl the rock at another artist—we are coming to him—because he was a carver of stone, and therefore seized the nearest if not dearest object ready to his hand? or was it because of the *Sturm und Drang* within his inmost being that lay there unconsciously to him but belonged to his inherited entity as a descendant of endless ancestors who executed justice by stoning those with whom they differed in religion and politics? We must leave

this nice point to the psychologists who run things nowadays and do not hesitate to mount and even bestride Presidential chairs.

The rock, we regret to say, was hurled at Mr. F. T. Hutchens, painter-artist, erstwhile student at the Académie Julien in Paris, not to speak of the Colarossi, an artist whose paintings are in museums, a member of the Salmagundi Club! And why, pray? Merely (it would seem) because he was culling from amid the nacreous wavelets of the sweet Silvermine a few mossy boulders—or were they "rocks"?—in that stretch which passes the Demesne of Hoag. That and nothing more. Observe the tragic situation: Hutchens ambling peacefully along, thinking perchance of Isaac Walton and John Muir, of troutlets once known in the Silvermine and of moraines that mark the stages of the last Glacial Age on Connecticut and Long Island. He, innocent, acquires stones; on him, O wretched, stones pour! Is it strange that he should hale the stone-thrower into court and ask why, when he might have expected bread, he received a petrification?

But the real question is, whether there may not be a latent, but none the less a fearsome, antagonism in the breasts of sculptors and painters one against the other. Painters have an irritating way of assuming a Prussian attitude of the super-artist toward other professors of active æsthetics. Sculptors, if we could lay their souls open with the psychological scalpel, would be revealed as men who look on painters as rather futile, effeminate creatures. In fine, sculptors and painters tolerate one another; nothing more. Must we not throw overboard the suggestion that Mr. Hoag "rocked" Mr. Hutchens for taking mossbacked stones from his reach of the Silvermine because of an irresistible urge of his inner and inherited cosmos, and fall back on the curious feeling of the superiority of form over color?

This would be a good subject for debate before the National Academy of Letters and the Arts.

SOCIETY OF ARTISTS FOR BROOKLYN

Brooklyn Borough, City of New York, has organized a society of artists that will hold its first exhibition in November. At present only sculpture, oil-painting, water-colors and pastels will be accepted, but later on it is proposed to include the art-crafts and graphic arts. The intention is to have artists who live in Brooklyn as exhibitors, limiting the work as far as possible to local artists. Brooklyn has one of the best art museums in the land and Brooklyn people take a warm and justifiable pride in the æsthetic side of their great city within a city—as any one can see by observing the high quality of public statuary in the squares and streets and the beauty of Prospect Park, not to mention the care taken to provide the boulevards and avenues and a vast number of the ordinary streets with trees. President is Mr. Frederick C. Boston, Vice-Presidents are Messrs. Benjamin Eggleston and Harry Roseland, Treasurer is Nicolas Macsoud and Secretary is Eugene V. Brewster, 409 Washington Avenue.

There will be two exhibitions each year, a Spring and an Autumn show. Dues are only five dollars